DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 864 HE 026 300

AUTHOR Bunda, Mary Anne, Ed.
TITLE Instructional Exchange, 1992-1993.
INSTITUTION Western Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo. Office of Instructional Development and Univ. Assessment.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 26p.
AVAILABLE FROM Office of University Assessment, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5767.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Instructional Exchange; v4 n1-6 Sep-Mar 1992-93

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adjunct Faculty; Assignments; *Classroom Techniques; *College Faculty; College Students; Feedback; Higher Education; Learning Strategies; Teaching Methods; Textbooks; Textbook Selection; Transfer Students
IDENTIFIERS Diversity (Faculty); *Western Michigan University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this newsletter, published six times yearly during Western Michigan University's (WMU) fall and winter semesters, is to provide a forum for the exchange of information about instruction at the university. The first of six issues collected here looks at the contribution and role of adjunct professors. This issue includes a list of questions to help departments better welcome the adjuncts as colleagues, an essay on being a good teacher, and a brief article on the benefits of having these part-time professionals on campus. The second issue focuses on textbook selection and offers a selection checklist as well as discussion. An issue on helping students get the most out of textbooks covers learning to read actively, strategies for motivating students, an annotation strategy, and reading techniques. The fourth issue, on transfer students and their needs, looks at WMU services for these students, provides a faculty checklist of ways to help, and concludes by printing some of the transfer students' own suggestions on how to succeed at WMU. Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education are the subject of the next-to-last issue. Those principles include encouraging student-faculty contact, encouraging cooperation among students, encouraging active learning, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. The final issue discusses the usefulness of feedback about classroom learning. Each issue also includes references. (JB)

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Instructional Exchange

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

VOLUME 4 - Number 1 - 6

1992-1993.

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 1 September 1992

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008 5124

Celebrating Faculty Diversity

Too often we have been trapped into believing that all faculty are alike. We picture faculty as full-time members of the University community balancing pursuit of instructional goals, research, and service. Our discussions of teaching have reflected this unsophisticated view of the University instructional staff. This issue contains two articles that were submitted last year which reminded us to broaden our view to see the mosaic of Western faculty.

This issue will celebrate those instructors who work with our students while balancing their teaching duties with full-time employment off campus: the adjunct professors. Our remarks, complemented by the views of Professors William F. Morrison and Neal Davis, will look at the ways students benefit from the diversity of the instructional staff and the special relationships these individuals have with their full-time colleagues. In typical I/X style, the ying and yang of teaching and learning are replaced with the special benefits that accrue from the diverse teaching population and the responsibility full-time faculty have to mentor adjunct professors. The twin foci, we hope, will stimulate communication within departments.

Like Greive (1989), our faculty have pointed out that adjunct faculty bring to the classroom expertise from the work environment outside the collegiate environment. Students are likely to attend to adjunct faculty differently precisely because they hold employment in outside settings. They are able to successfully integrate textbook theory with application in the workplace which contributes to the effectiveness of learning. They have an advantage in being able to illustrate the applications of the theory or principles taught in the courses, thereby providing a realistic and useful perspective.

Our adjunct faculty, however, do not demonstrate the flip side that Greive (1990a) has listed as a set of "If-then" sentences that might characterize an adjunct professor's teaching career.

> If I'm early no one notices -- If I'm late everyone does.
> If I'm prepared for 101 -- I'm assigned 102.
> If bowling or bridge is on Tuesday -- My class is on Tuesday.
> If I have 25 handouts prepared -- There are 26 in the class.
> If I am well prepared -- The class is canceled.
> If I am under-prepared -- 53 people register. (p.7)

Feelings of frustration experienced by adjunct faculty are sometimes caused by isolation. Everyone else seems to know precisely what is going on. Adjunct faculty are not in the building every day. They sometimes teach in the evening when they may not interact with other faculty. There are many things they need to know. We provide a list of questions based on Greive (1990a, 1990b) to help departments better welcome adjuncts as colleagues.

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Faculty Information Needs Checklist

1. What are the names of the department chairperson, dean, and director and other officials? Who is the departmental secretary?

2. Are all of the forms completed for official employment? (It's demoralizing when an expected paycheck doesn't arrive.)

3. Is there a pre-term faculty meeting? Are adjuncts expected to attend? How much advanced notice are they given? If the meeting is held during the regular working day when most adjunct professors have other obligations, can adjuncts receive the materials and a summary at some later time?

4. Is there a departmental course syllabus, course outline, or statement of goals and objectives available for the course? What are the expectations about personalizing the course? How much freedom does the adjunct professor have?

5. Are there prepared departmental handouts? Is there departmental policy on the amount of copying that can be done for handouts? How do you prepare a course pack?

6. Are there prepared departmental tests?

7. Where is and how do I get my copy of the text and the supportive materials for teaching the class? Who selected this book? Are other sections using the same text? Does the bookstore have enough copies of the required text for my class? What are the bookstore policies?

8. How do I get materials on reserve at the library? What is the library check-out policy for students? Will the library keep personal material on reserve for my class? What library privileges do I have?

9. What instructional support aids are available? How do I order an overhead projector? How can I get transparencies made? Is there a film library? How much lead time should I allow for such orders?

10. Is there a departmental and/or college attendance or tardiness policy?

11. Is there anything special about the term calendar I should know? Does homecoming cancel classes? Are there College meetings that students must attend?

12. When are grades due at the University? Who do I turn my grades into? How and when do the students receive the grades?

13. Is there a college or departmental grading policy?

14. Is there a student evaluation of instruction in this course? Do I have a sample copy of the form? Should I expect to get feedback?

15. How do I get a parking sticker?

16. Are there electronic communication systems I can join?

Help in Writing

The Academic Skills Center offers tutoring in writing for undergraduate students only. The Writing Lab is located in 1039 Moore Hall. Students may be referred for writing help in two different ways: a professor referral or self referral. The referral may result in a regular one- to two-hour-a-week tutoring session or a drop-in session. However, students should be aware that appointments must be made a week in advance for drop-in sessions. Tutoring is available from September 14 to December 4. Tutors can work with students on redrafting papers for any class.

The lab hours are 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Friday.

If you have any questions, call 387-4442.

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On Being A Good Teacher

by
William F. Morrison

Today I have the same concerns which I felt when meeting my first class thirty-three years ago. Too often we forget why we are teaching. Sometimes we forget to center our concerns on the student.

The student rightfully expects a teacher to know the subject matter of his or her course. It should be our primary task to share our knowledge with the student. The teacher must inspire the student. Should the day come when I lose my enthusiasm in the classroom I must stop teaching.

A teacher must always be well prepared. This means not merely knowing his/her subject but also being sure the material is current. One concern is to make an orderly arrangement of the course rather than to skip from subject to subject. Sometimes this is difficult. Warmed-over material repeated semester after semester is boring. It will be greeted with groans by the students. Class notes should be discarded each semester so new notes will be used in future classes.

Show interest in each student and his/her concerns. Make yourself available. Be sincere when you invite them to visit with you in your office. Post your office hours each semester. Be on time and faithfully adhere to your schedule to the best of your ability. Never forget the reason you are teaching is because of the student. Put the student at ease in the classroom and also in office visits. Never forget a little humor is a valuable tool.

You might assume as I have done that the student knows certain basics of your subject matter. This is not always the case. Encourage the student to ask questions. Answer each question plainly with courtesy rather than with boredom or disgust. This is very important today with the influx of international students in our universities.

Praise the student who works to the best of his/her ability regardless of the grade earned. Encourage the student to broaden his/her view and knowledge rather than merely to work for a high grade. Strive to make your subject matter a tool for the graduate to use in the workplace. As an undergraduate student at the University of Iowa many years ago, I was inspired by a class. Professor Benjamin Shambaugh started a course he called "The Campus Course." He assigned books to be read on various subjects, such as political science, history, the sciences, art, etc. Each week Professor Shambaugh would invite one outstanding person in his/her field to speak to the class. Sometimes the guest speaker was a professor; other times he would invite prominent leaders in science and industry. What a wonderful course this was for over two hundred and fifty fortunate students. Each class was pure excitement! The memory of this class will remain with me always.

A professor should expect and demand respect from every student. In turn the student can expect the same from the professor. Foul language has no place in a university. Being loud and talkative in a classroom is disruptive and cannot be tolerated. Present your material on a schedule. End classes promptly. When you agree to do something for a student such as writing a letter of recommendation, DO IT!

To be a satisfied teacher you must be enthusiastic about your subject, enjoy your students and show a sincere interest in them. Always maintain a respectful sense of humor and leave complaints out of your classroom.

Enjoy! Teaching is a wonderful profession and truly rewarding.

William F. Morrison is an adjunct professor of Finance and Commercial Law. He began his career at Western Michigan University in 1959. He received his doctorate (J.D.) at the University of Iowa.

About Instructional Exchange

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Interaction Between Students and Adjunct Instructors A "Win-Win" Educational Experience

by
Neal Davis

Psychologists generally agree that the most effective learning mode is learning by example.

Adjunct instructors and the students who interact with them have a unique opportunity to influence the behavior of each other and thus influence the value of knowledge and education delivered and received.

In the first case, the adjunct instructor can influence the student in that the adjunct instructor is presumed to be [more] directly in tune with the subject that he/she represents. In many cases, the adjunct instructor has just left the [subject] work environment a short time before class, and for that reason, the information that the adjunct instructor talks about and the behavior that is demonstrated speaks a lot about the current position of the profession.

Adjunct instructors are, in reality, looked upon as outside "career" professionals first and college instructors second. Therefore, the way we conduct ourselves in the classroom speaks a lot about the profession to the student.

The second benefit from this interaction is that the adjunct instructor has the opportunity to gain a more in-depth feeling about the student's perception, needs, and desires, as it relates to his or her concerns about entering a specific profession. For example, the adjunct instructor can help advise the student in his or her understanding of how to develop and/or present skills to potential employees.

The third benefit is that the adjunct instructor can assist in directly communicating students' perceptions and/or concerns about the profession to the organization, thus providing valuable feedback to an organization.

When handled properly, the association between the adjunct instructor and the student can be a very powerful learning combination. It is an excellent learning opportunity and a win-win educational experience.

Neal Davis is an adjunct professor of Industrial Engineering. He began his career at Western Michigan University in 1990. He received his master's degree at Aquinas College.

Documentation Workshop

The Academic Skills Center is going to offer Documentation Workshops during the Fall semester. The goals of the workshops are to inform students about the correct citation style in research papers, both in the bodies of the paper and in listing the sources in a bibliography or list of references. A unique series of workshops, each consisting of 6 sessions, will be developed for APA and MLA styles. The schedules for the series are as follows:

Series One: **The APA workshop** will be held from 4:00 to 5:00 pm on Sept. 15, Sept. 22, Sept. 29, Oct. 6, Oct. 13, and Oct. 20 in Room 1034 of Moore Hall.
The MLA workshop will be held from 5:00 to 6:00 pm on Sept. 17, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, Oct. 8, Oct. 15, and Oct. 22 in 2207 of Sangren Hall.

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Registration is REQUIRED for each session. Applicants must register in person in 1044 Moore Hall.

For more information, call 387-4442.

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 2 October 1992

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

What Should One Look For In Selecting A College Textbook?

Textbook selection for a college course is very important and very time-consuming. Usually, the larger the selection available, the more difficult it is to make a choice. Due to the complexity of the task combined with the press of time, very often instructors will simply take a look at one or two books, maybe talk with colleagues to find out what they use, and then try to find a textbook that works with the course objectives. Criteria for selection are not clear-cut.

A good method of textbook selection should be responsive to learner characteristics and course objectives. Although several objective methods and formulae can be used to help assess variables such as readability and interest level, these formulae have been criticized on the grounds that they do not consider enough variables. For example, according to Chatman and Goetz (1985), although some readability formulae attempt to predict the difficulty that students at different levels will have reading the text, they are imperfect reflections of comprehensibility because they do not consider concept difficulty, quality of writing, or student background, interest, and motivation. However, most researchers of textbook selection agree that several variables must be considered before making the choice, e.g., readability, organization, availability of teaching and learning aids, interest level, timeliness, and cost.

How to sort through all the textbooks? How to balance one's needs against what textbooks can provide? What should one look for in selecting a college textbook? How can we have a text that will help students best learn from it? To help answer these questions, we have included a text selection checklist based on Redei(1984) and Hemmings & Battersby (1990). The checklist gives us insight into criteria used by a range of educators when examining textbooks. Of course, not everyone will use all the criteria that have been listed, but you will at least find some interesting points in them because they cover most factors that need to be addressed before making the selection decision.

Readability is the most often mentioned variable. If a textbook is written at an appropriate reading level, it will help to keep students interested in the course and prevent frustration. Sometimes the textbook is too difficult for its readers to adequately comprehend, i.e., readers have to read a paragraph three times to figure out what the author is trying to convey. Sometimes the textbook is so easy that it does not challenge readers. In either case, the textbook cannot be considered readable and reader friendly. But there is no ideal readability level for all classroom environments. Reading difficulty should be matched to classroom needs.

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Textbook Selection Checklist

_____1. Is the material written in an appropriate style? It should not be chatty, flowery, or self-aggrandizing.

_____2. Is the presentation scholarly--unambiguous without being too detailed and confusing?

_____3. Are the details overwhelming so that critical features fail to stand out in a forest of information?

_____4. Is the language simple and straightforward, or is it loaded with outlandish expressions, big words, or many unnecessary technical terms or jargon?

_____5. Are there errors of fact and interpretation? In a well organized text, a few minor errors are forgivable; however, many small errors lend a careless appearance.

_____6. Is the length of sentences, paragraphs, and the book adequate? Some textbooks are written in the style of research articles. This does not appeal to students.

_____7. Does an overview or summary precede each chapter?

_____8. Is there a summary at the end of each chapter?

_____9. Is an advanced organizer used at the beginning of the chapter? If yes, does it provide a useful framework that helps clarify the ideas presented in the chapter?

_____10. Are headings consistent within the chapters? Are they well leveled?

_____11. Are spatial cues effective for scanning? Pages that are full of words without appropriate spaces or margins usually are very difficult to read.

_____12. Do chapters provide cues that are simple and clear to follow?

_____13. Are illustrations(i.e., pictures, diagrams, cartoons, and photographs) sufficiently clear and self-explanatory? Most students are visually oriented. They appreciate "show and tell".

_____14. Are illustrations relevant to the text? Do they provide information crucial for understanding the text?

_____15. Does the author use a variety of materials(including flow charts, algorithms, and information mapping) to maintain appeal?

_____16. Are clear instructions given about use of these illustrative aids?

_____17. Are questions provided at the end of each chapter to test understanding?

_____18. Is the questioning aimed at an appropriate level?

_____19. Are answers available for the reader's use? Are answers to problems explained?

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...More Checklist

_____20. Does the author provide additional notes and/or suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter?

_____21. If yes, does the author discuss the relevance of the reference?

_____22. Is the material up-to-date? Does it reflect the current status of the field?

_____23. Does the author suggest to the reader how the textbook should be read?

_____24. If yes, does the author provide different instructions for beginning students and more advanced readers?

_____25. Does the publisher provide an instructor's manual?

_____26. Does this manual provide additional problems suitable for homework assignments? Most students learn easier if they work through problems that require synthesis of information in the text.

_____27. How does the price of the book compare with that of its competitors?

Checklist about course strategy:

_____1. Does your background and outlook complement the course?

_____2. Are you prepared to teach a course of this content?

_____3. Are you convinced that this is the material you could teach with enthusiasm?

_____4. What are the teaching and learning goals of this course?

_____5. Is the book's content--the principles and examples covered--relevant to students' interest?

_____6. Will the material complement rather than overlap with that of courses taught by other instructors?

_____7. What is the level of the course? Are the pre-requisites approved for the course sufficient for the level of the book?

_____8. Does the book present a sufficiently comprehensive overview of the field, or is it too selective, reflecting only the author's interest?

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According to Schneider (1991), in addition to word difficulty and sentence length, which are the two strongest language variables that have been identified in the literature, several other factors should be considered when examining readability levels, such as chapter summaries, glossaries, paragraph length, coherence, illustrations, and examples, which can increase textbook readability.

The organization of the textbook includes how the book and individual chapters are introduced and how well verbal cues are used to make text organization clear and cohesive (Schumm,Ross & Walker, 1992). A description of contents in each chapter, a summary of the key concepts at the end of each chapter, consistent headings and subheadings within each chapter are factors that need to be considered. A well organized and readable textbook usually is considered interesting by its readers.

Availability of teaching and learning aids, such as instructor's manuals, student study guides, and other supplementary materials sometimes can be very helpful to both instructors and students if they are appropriate for the course objectives.

In addition to all the variables mentioned above, timeliness and cost should also be considered when selecting textbooks. A recently published book usually contains up-to-date information and tends to be more interesting and appealing to its readers. Cost is a factor that students care about more than instructors do. Our office conducted a survey on Student Perception of Textbook Usefulness. When being asked to respond to the item about whether the cost of the text was reasonable, 66.5% of the respondents said "Never." Therefore, given that other variables are equal, books with modest prices may be preferable because often the price of a book does not seem to reflect its value. Students also identified each of the above variables as important factors in their assessment of textbooks, that is, they wanted books that were well organized and up-to-date and had glossaries, used examples, and had study guides. They also wanted the books to be used in the class, i.e., referred to in the lecture and related to exams.

In addition to all the variables mentioned above, instructors should also consider course strategy and course level. A good textbook should not only be readable, interesting, well organized, and cost-reasonable, but also matched to the background of instructors, their teaching strategy, and departmental requirements. Therefore, we also include an additional checklist that asks questions about course strategies.

About Instructional Exchange

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 3 November 1992

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

Help Students Get the Most Out of Textbooks

Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation. It is an active learning process (Irwin, 1989). However, many college students, especially freshmen, typically read passively.

Many students are bored by the reading they must do for their courses. Darren J. Smith (1992) of Indiana University at Bloomington observed, "Generally, academic reading is not associated with personal enjoyment. In fact, rarely, if ever, do students get excited at the thought of fulfilling a reading assignment. This lack of enthusiasm may result from texts being used in a way that implies reading is simply a passive act of collecting facts and ideas without any purpose." (p630)

As a matter of fact, many college students still "study" textbooks as they did in high school. They usually read the words, underline or highlight line after line, and when they finish reading the assigned chapter(s), they can't wait to close the textbooks, thinking that they have completed the reading assignment. The job is to finish as quickly and with as little effort as possible. Before the exam day, they may look over the underlined words and sentences again and try to memorize as much as they can. Without assistance, this passive reading style will continue in college students. As Smith points out, reading is simply viewed by students as the transmission of information that is mediated by the teacher. He suggests that we should begin to view reading as a transaction instead of an accumulation of information.

To find out how his students actually read, Smith developed a textbook assessment questionnaire and did a survey among his students. The results of the survey provided a good insight into how his students viewed textbook reading. One student considered reading as time consuming, so he didn't like reading. Another complained that the excessive amount of information in the book made it difficult to know what to focus on. One student summed it up by saying, "What's the point of reading so much when so little appears on tests?" One assumption that students have is that they read for exams and for exams only.

These interesting comments help us understand that as teachers we have the responsibility to help our students read and learn actively. Some techniques and strategies can be incorporated into teaching plans to help motivate students to read.

But how can we accomplish that? How can we help students get the most out of textbooks? How can we motivate students to read? In this issue, we are going to provide some strategies and tips that can be adopted to help our students become active readers.

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Strategies That Motivate Students To Read

Based upon the practical tips for teaching professors edited by Magnan (1989), we have provided the following strategies that can be incorporated into your teaching plan to motivate students to read textbooks actively.

1) Before they read, use a review to preview.

Review the concepts, terms, and facts that your students may already know relating to the reading. It is a way to link new information to their previous knowledge. By reviewing to preview, students' imagination and curiosity may be sparked. If the text has advanced organizers, suggest that students assess the "newness" of the material by focusing on the outline provided.

2) Discuss the topics briefly beforehand.

Discuss the topic that will be covered in the reading before making the reading assignment, but do it in general terms. The discussion should help to lead students to the reading with questions in their minds that need to be answered. The overview you provide before their reading should avoid details or specifics in the reading. Don't let students feel that the reading is just a review. Make them feel that it is essential.

3) Explain terms and words.

If the textbook does not provide definitions of new terms at the beginning of a chapter, go over vocabulary essential to the reading. Some terms and words may be difficult for students to understand without a simple definition or example. An explanation of difficult and new words in simple terms can reduce the difficulty associated with understanding the contents.

4) Put questions in their heads.

Raise several questions to stimulate their curiosity and also to give them a focus on the reading. Ask them to find facts and to analyze and evaluate what they have read. Your preview and discussion should always end with several questions.

5) Give outlines for the next discussion.

Give students an outline of the points you'll cover and ask them to prepare for a discussion of the reading for the next class. Ask them to bring in any additional questions they may have about the reading.

6) Give students reasons to read.

Don't repeat in class the details in the readings. This method absolves those who don't read and penalizes through boredom those who do. If the text focuses on a single example to illustrate a concept, use a different example in class. Compare the lecture material to the text.

7) Assume the best, plan for the worst.

Don't assume students aren't reading and teach in ways that confirm what you suspect. Even if you know that some aren't reading, don't feel obligated to summarize for them. Challenge them to read. Don't try to give answers to your questions too soon. Doing so will encourage those who are not prepared to rely on you and those who have read the material. Letting students feel left out may motivate them to read.

8) Use readings in class and on tests.

Discussing the most important point, idea, argument, and examples in class will help students understand the value of reading and increase participation. Don't just assign the reading and never cover the material in the exams. Students may stop reading if they feel there is nothing valuable in the textbook. Usually, they judge it by seeing how importantly you treat the material; in other words, whether you will test them on the material or not.

9) Appreciate reading.

Share your reading experience with your students. Show them how you feel about reading and even tell them the difficulties you have in reading. This may help keep students from being frustrated when they read.

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Textbook Annotation Strategy In Reading

To help students become more efficient and effective readers, Simpson and Nist (1990) of the University of Georgia have developed a textbook annotation strategy. They pointed out that just teaching students to underline or highlight important ideas was insufficient. The annotation strategy they developed encouraged students to elaboratively process ideas and to monitor their understanding.

The annotation strategy involved seven basic processes:

a) Write brief summaries in the text margins using own words.
b) Enumerate multiple ideas (i.e., causes, effects, characteristics) in an organized fashion.
c) Note examples of concepts in the margins by writing EX for instance.
d) Put key information on graphs and charts next to the text when appropriate.
e) Jot down possible test questions.
f) Note puzzling or confusing ideas with a question mark in the margin.
g) Selectively underline key words or phrases.

The experimental research Simpson and Nist conducted proved that training students to annotate texts enabled them to perform more effectively over time.

Since they have been refining the annotation strategy over the years, they noticed that, generally speaking, students fell into one of three categories when they first learned to annotate:

1) Students who annotate too much. The notations these students write in the margin are almost identical to the textbook statements. They usually try to memorize instead of stating ideas in their own words. Teaching this type of student how to paraphrase is essential. The focus is on having them summarize key ideas in their own words.

2) Students who do not annotate enough. Usually, these are passive readers who do not actively interact with expository text. They may overlook the passage's basic structure and miss the key ideas. Therefore, they need practice on annotation. During the practice, some students may change from too little to too much. If that is the case, they also need to be trained on paraphrasing.

3) Students who cannot precisely state key ideas. These students usually can find and understand the author's descriptions of the topic, but choose not to note them in the margin in order to save time. Actually the students don't realize that if they briefly annotate key words in the text's margins, they may save a lot of time on rereading for test preparation.

Three questions can be used to help students while they read and annotate:

1) What is the topic?
2) What does the author say about the topic?
3) Where in the text does the author say this?

To make this strategy work, instructors must allow sufficient time for students to master the new strategy. It is also important to provide students with immediate and specific feedback on their attempts with the strategy.

The following annotation checklist developed by Simpson and Nist is helpful if you intend to try the strategy with your students. You may ask your students to annotate the assigned readings on index cards by identifying main ideas of the chapter, paraphrasing and giving examples of key concepts, enumerating ideas, and raise questions. When you read through the cards, first, you can get an idea whether students understand the reading and what common questions they have about the reading so that you will know what to focus on during your lecture. Second, this practice gets your students actively involved in their reading. Your prompt feedback will stimulate their interest and help them improve in the future.

Annotation checklist

--- Your annotations are perfect! Keep up the good work.
--- You have missed many key ideas. Go back and reread.
--- You need to focus more on key ideas and less on details.
--- You need to use your own words. Do not copy from the book!
--- You need to be briefer in your annotations--be telegraphic.
--- You are annotating too much! Be selective.
--- You need to code the specific examples.
--- Please see me as soon as possible for special assistance on this chapter and your annotations.

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Reading Techniques

You can suggest many different reading techniques to your students to help them read more actively. SQ3R and PROR are among those that have been recommended most in the literature. SQ3R stands for survey, question, read, recite, and review. This technique works well when students need to understand the texts thoroughly and remember completely (Campbell, 1993). PROR stands for preread, read, organize, and review. According to Nist and Diehl (1990), the difference between the two techniques is that PROR focuses more on learning the material in such a way that it will stimulate critical thinking rather than simple memorization. Self-monitoring is built into each stage of PROR. Nist and Diehl devised PROR from SQ3R to make the system more effective and efficient for students. The principles PROR suggests are built around the idea that what students do before and after they read is as important as the reading itself.

PROR = **P**reread--**R**ead--**O**rganize--**R**eview

1. **Preread**--"Psych up", i.e., create interest

Read the title of the chapter and think about what you already know about the topic. Then read the headings, subheadings, introduction, and summary of the chapter to do the preview. Begin to formulate possible questions about key concepts and ask yourself:

"What is this chapter going to be about?"

2. **Read**--Be selective

Annotate while you read. Make notes in the text's margins. At the end of the annotation, ask yourself:

"Am I understanding the information in this chapter?"

3. **Organize**--Reduce the information

Write down the information that you will need to learn for the test. Reduce the information by isolating important information and formulate more specific test questions as you become more familiar with the material. Ask yourself:

"Do I know this information well enough to score high on the test?"

4. **Review**--Monitor your learning

Put major points on a notecard and make sure that you can use details and examples to support your main points. Ask yourself:

"Specifically, what information do I know very well? What information do I not know as well?"

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Help in Writing

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 4 January 1993

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

The Transfer Student: An Endangered Species?

Robert C. Dickeson (1992) lists the top 10 reasons students stay at an institution: (1) caring attitude of faculty/staff; (2) high quality teaching; (3) adequate financial aid; (4) student involvement on campus; (5) high quality advising; (6) excellent counseling services; (7) excellent career planning; (8) student/institutional 'fit'; (9) admissions geared to graduation; (10) early alert system.

Among the students who come to Western Michigan University, transfer students are a large but generally forgotten group. These students are nontraditional in that they do not fit in the 'pipeline,' long a metaphor for student progress to graduation. Rather, they typify the changing nature of higher education from 'pipeline' to 'swirl,' a term used recently by Robert Zemsky, Director, Institute for Research on Higher Education (1992). As we start a new semester and a new year, we will take a closer look at transfer students as a group, focusing particularly on who they are, what they need to know, what faculty can do to help them connect with the University, and what they believe has helped them to succeed at Western.

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Transfer students are beginners at Western Michigan University who started their college career at some other institution. Some come from community colleges, some from other four-year schools. Lynne McCauley, Director of the Center for Academic Support Programs, offers this comparison of the transfer student and the traditional beginning freshman.

The typical transfer student is more mature and more sophisticated than the typical freshman. Transfer students know more. They have made a more conscious choice to come here. We don't have to sell the University to them. We have to prove that we care and that we'd like them to stay. Most freshmen don't know what they need to know; transfer students do. They need to learn our system.

Ken Schaefer, Coordinator of Community College Articulation; Mary Anne Bunda, Director of University Assessment; and Peninnah Miller, Director of Institutional Research, offer this information about the typical student who transfers to Western.

We enrolled 2,126 new transfer students in fall semester, 1992. We will have close to 800 new transfers this winter. Seventy percent come from community colleges; the other 30 percent are from four-year schools. The average age of fall's transfer enrollees was 22. Their program choices, in order of interest by college, were Education, Arts & Sciences, Business, Engineering & Applied Sciences, undecided, Health & Human Services, and Fine Arts.

Transfer students comprise a big proportion of every graduating class. According to the Office of University Assessment, percentages of graduates for

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academic years 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 are as follows:

	Beginners	Transfers	Reenters
AY 89-90	41%	48%	10%
AY 90-91	46%	44%	10%

"Reenters" have interrupted their academic careers by a full calendar year and may have started as either beginners or transfer students.

The Office of Institutional Research has compiled the following statistics about graduation/drop out percentages, by college, for students beginning or transferring in 1986 followed through the Winter 1990 term. Given that only four years had lapsed between admissions and the end of the study period, over one-third of the beginners were continuing in their programs.

	Beginners		Transfers	
	Grad	Drop out	Grad	Drop out
A&S	16.7	34.8	42.6	35.7
FA	14.1	29.7	41.3	30.0
ENG	12.4	35.6	51.1	29.6
BUS	27.4	30.0	60.3	25.8
EDU	10.9	25.0	56.3	29.0
HHS	29.5	23.0	62.5	22.9

Campus Resources: What They Need to Know

Transfer students do not usually participate in the kind of orientation available to first-time beginners. Vincent Tinto (1987) notes that for this reason, transfer students face barriers that traditional beginners do not. As Levitz and Noel (1990) have found, *the most successful colleges and universities are those that see themselves as active participants in the student's intellectual, social, and personal growth. Such institutions do not sit by and wait for the students to take the initiative. On the contrary, they take steps to ensure that the student becomes involved.* To back up this statement, they cite two examples: Notre Dame, a highly selective university, with an attrition rate of 1%, and Edward Williams College (of Fairleigh Dickinson University), a nonselective, two-year school with an attrition rate of 10%, down from 50%. Both schools take "a highly active role in ensuring student success."

One way that we as faculty can promote student success is through awareness of campus resources and willingness to share this information with students. Some key resources that transfer students may ask you about are Waldo Library, careers, Computing Services, supplemental instruction and tutorial workshops, academic advising, and Phi Theta Kappa.

Waldo Library

Galen Rike, Head, Central Reference Services (7-5181) and David Isaacson, Assistant Head, Reference Services (7-5182), will set up instructional sessions for classes in the Instructional Services Room at Waldo Library. Students attending the sessions will use practice terminals to access the West Michigan Information Network. Patricia VanderMeer, End-User Services Librarian (7-5191), will also inform you of WESTNET workshops available this semester. Students will find numerous printed guides with step-by-step instructions on use of library services at several points in the Reference Department.

Career Assessment Battery

For students who are unsure of their career plans, the Career Battery Assessment may be useful. They may pick up a copy of the test from Testing and Evaluation Services, Walwood Building, East Campus; University Curriculum, 203 Moore Hall; or Lee Honors College. The test costs $5.

University Computing Services Center

Students who want computer accounts but do not get them through a class may obtain a Student Personal Account (STPA). Applications are available at the University Computing Services (UCS) Office, third floor, University Computing Center Building. After the student presents a validated WMU ID and application, the STPA will usually be activated within 24 hours.

Additionally, students may go to public labs or the Help Desk, UCS, for software and hardware help documentation. Faculty may get master copies of UCS documents for duplication and distribution to classes by sending an e-mail request to UCS_DOCUMENTS. Days, times, and registration information for workshops is also available at the e-mail prompt by typing HELP_WORKSHOPS.

About Instructional Exchange

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The newsletter is published by the Office of University Assessment. Comments and exchanges can be directed to the I/X staff at University Assessment (Room 2010 Administration Building, ph: 7-3031) or through the VAX system addressed to BUNDA.
Special Guest Editor: Marcia Mascolini
Managing Editor: Mary Anne Bunda Production Editor: Jie Gao

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Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a proven means of helping students succeed in high-risk courses. It is not a remedial program. Rather it is a program of scheduled out-of-class sessions, led by a trained peer leader, that complement selected classes. With the cooperation of instructors listed for each class, SI is available for the following courses: Chemistry 103 (G. Lowry), Electrical Engineering 210 (S. Mousavinezhad), Geology 130 (E. Atekwana and W. Smith), Math 118 (J. Petro).

Academic Skills Center Workshops

In addition to administering SI, the Academic Skills Center offers tutoring in writing (See Help in Writing box) and several other free workshops for students. These include a Math Workshop, Study Skills Workshops, a Critical Reading Workshop, a Problem Solving and Reasoning Skills Workshop, and Documentation Workshops on APA style and MLA style.

The workshops are organized in two series. Series 1 runs from the week of January 11 through the week of February 19; Series 2 is from the week of February 22 through the week of April 9. Information on the workshops is available from the Academic Skills Center, 387-4422. Students must register for workshops in the Skills Center, 1044 Moore Hall.

Phi Theta Kappa

Community and two-year technical college graduates who have been inducted into Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society may join the alumni chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. Contact chapter adviser Ken Schaefer, Admissions, 387-2000.

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What Faculty Can Do -- A Checklist

Here is a short list of ideas that Western faculty say work for them in helping transfer students and other students connect with the University.

-- **Use proper names** for places, courses, etc., both in speaking about them and on your syllabus. ("Waldo" is a bar, a library, and a fictional person. If you mean Waldo Library, use that term.) Remember that names change from campus to campus. For example on some campuses, libraries are called "resource centers."

-- **Listen carefully to questions** that transfer students have and probe to find the question beneath the question. (If you are a department adviser, and the student tells you he/she is "undecided," find out what the student is undecided about. Sometimes it is a major within your college. Don't immediately ship the student to "another office.")

-- **Ask in the first week of classes** whether any students are new to the University. Offer information about the library, writing lab, computing services, and other key services that students in your discipline will profit from learning about.

-- **Help students avoid the run around.** Remember, most transfer students don't participate in orientation. They get information by asking questions. Open the catalog or the campus directory and help them get directly to the right person. Because many of the same questions will recur, you can easily conceptualize a pattern to their requests.

-- **Ask transfer students to meet with a college adviser.** The college adviser will analyze the complete transcript to ensure that students have fulfilled University requirements needed for graduation.

-- **Follow up** with both students and college advising offices with post cards or phone calls to make sure this important task has been completed.

-- **Circulate a "communications list"** to be duplicated and distributed so that students can volunteer names and phone numbers to facilitate their contacting each other.

-- **Invite students to contact you** through e-mail as well as by telephone or drop in during office hours.

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How to Succeed at Western

We asked a group of upperclass transfer students what advice they would give to new students entering the University. Their responses focused primarily upon issues such as choosing majors, planning their curricula, and adopting behaviors that allowed them to succeed. Their answers to our question, "If you could give a new student one piece of advice to make going to Western easier, what would it be?", suggest ways that we as faculty can prepare ourselves to help them.

Transfer students consider choice of a major their single most important decision on entering the University. Typical comments on this topic are as follows:

Set specific goals to achieve, and think about what you want to gain from your academic career. Explore the majors offered at Western and narrow them down. Check out all the areas of interest so you know for sure that what you major in is what you want. Choose a major as soon as possible. Understand exactly what classes are needed for your major. Choose wisely; bad judgment will haunt you!

Transfer students also seek and value curricular information from departmental advisers. Comments such as the following appeared repeatedly.

Find a good adviser who is genuinely interested in your well being and education. Meet with your counselor on a regular basis. Talk to major, minor, and general ed. counselors before signing up for classes. Keep in constant contact with a counselor to keep track of classes you need to take. Go and see an adviser and plan out what you are going to do over the coming years and how. Visit an adviser twice a semester to make sure you are on track and that their advice is consistent. Know the requirements.

Transfer students suggested the following behaviors that helped them succeed at Western.

Don't screw up your first semester. Ask questions. Don't skip classes; it's habit forming. Ask more questions. Familiarize yourself with the environment before the semester starts. Learn the library. Get organized. Get a parking space at 7 a.m. and park it. Don't be afraid to ask questions and lots of them.

Help in Writing

The Academic Skills Center offers tutoring in writing for undergraduate students only. The Writing Lab is located in 1039 Moore Hall. Students may be referred for writing help in two different ways: , a professor referral or self referral. The referral may result in a regular one- to two-hour-a-week tutoring session or a drop-in session. However, students should be aware that appointments must be made a week in advance for drop-in sessions. Tutoring is available from January 16 to April 6. Tutors can work with students on redrafting papers for any class.

The lab hours are 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Friday.

If you have any questions, call 387-4442.

PROBLEM SOLVING AND REASONING SKILLS WORKSHOP

Offered by

Academic Skills Center

Workshops meet one hour a week (Wednesday 4:00-5:00 pm) for six weeks. Series I workshops begin the week of January 11. Series II workshops begin the week of February 22.

Students should register in person at the Academic Skills Center, 1044 Moore Hall.

For more information, please call 387-4442.

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 5 February 1993

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

The campus community is preparing to discuss the new General Education Program in March. Conversations are being held all over campus about what will be taught to and learned by all Western Michigan University undergraduates. We thought this might be an opportunity to look at how education is provided to undergraduate students. How do we make the environment a good learning environment? How do we interact with students? What guides our development of activities? What principles do we follow?

The American Association for Higher Education asked these questions of the entire higher education community several years ago and codified what scholars in the field believe to be the principles of best practice. This issue will give an overview of those principles. Additional material is available for departments or colleges interested in further discussion. See page 4 for details.

Some of the principles will be familiar to long-time readers. Based on 50 years of research on undergraduate teaching and learning, Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. These principles assert that good practice in undergraduate education:

1. Encourages student-faculty contact.
2. Encourages cooperation among students.
3. Encourages active learning.
4. Gives prompt feedback.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

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According to Mary Deane Sorcinelli (1991), who conducted an extensive review of the literature on undergraduate teaching and learning, "the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education provide substantive research-based advice that can enrich our understanding and practice of teaching and learning at the college level" (p. 22). She pointed out that although there would probably be variation in applying the Seven Principles to different disciplines, teaching methods, learning styles, institutions, and even methods of implementation, the Principles provide an important direction for improving undergraduate education.

In other words, the principles don't prescribe a structure for each class. Rather they set a tone for all activities on campus. In fact, the tone is reflected in the interactions among all members of the campus community. Institutional policies and practices are developed to celebrate academic excellence, collegial work habits, and the diversity of the community.

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Applying the Seven Principles

Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact

The literature on good teaching describes good teachers as approachable and interested in students. They are easy to talk to. They invite students to present their views and get students involved in discussion. They are concerned about student progress, and they are open to helping students with problems. They are accessible to students both inside and outside the classroom (Sorcinelli, 1991). Chickering and Gamson (1987) pointed out that professors who encouraged student contact both in and out of classes enhanced student motivation, intellectual commitment, and personal development.

Building rapport with your students is very important. You may not be able to help your students with all kinds of problems but, at least, you can give them necessary guidance and advice to help them get the assistance they need. Invite students to visit you outside class. Share your experiences and values with your students. Help them not only with academic problems, but also with problems in their extracurricular activities. Your concern will help students get through rough times and keep on working.

Good Practice Encourages Cooperation Among Students

The principle of cooperation among students suggests that working with group members often increases involvement in learning. It emphasizes active involvement of students as opposed to their passive exposure to a learning task. In cooperative learning, students work in small groups and receive recognition or reward based on group performance as a whole rather than on individual achievement. It is collaborative and social rather than competitive and isolated. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1990), research findings support the utility of cooperative learning groups for increasing productivity, developing committed and positive relationships among members, increasing social support, and enhancing self-esteem.

Some good ways to stimulate and encourage cooperation among students are group projects and presentations, peer teaching, i.e., students teaching students in situations planned and directed by teachers, peer critique, and student-centered discussion. Even in large classes, students can be assigned to a group of five to seven other students. They can be encouraged to meet regularly in and out of class throughout the term to solve problems set by the instructor.

Good Practice Encourages Active Learning

The connection between cooperative learning and active learning is close, yet they are distinguishable. While cooperative learning calls for active involvement of students as a group, active learning can be experienced by students individually. It requires students to engage in learning actively rather than simply relying on textbooks and memorizing facts. They must be able to relate what they are learning to real life situations.

Active learning can be encouraged both inside and outside classrooms. Inside the class, active learning can be encouraged by active questioning, case studies, discussions, and peer critiques. Outside class, independent study, internships, and research projects can be useful and beneficial. Active learning enhances students' ability to analyze and solve problems. It helps students take active responsibility for their own learning, and it strengthens students' maturity and sharpens their thinking.

Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback

Students learn well if they are provided timely feedback on practice. Menges and Mathis (1988)

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concluded that the content of a classroom presentation is better remembered when it is followed by a test. Or follow a presentation by giving students five minutes to write down what they have learned in class. According to Dunkin (1986), frequent testing, immediate feedback, and mastery of a unit before progression to the next topic were very important for increasing student achievement. Immediate, corrective, and supportive feedback is central to learning.

The quality of feedback depends on how feedback is given. A grade or a general comment on tests, papers, presentations, and projects is not enough. Informative comments that pinpoint the source of students' errors and indicate how they can improve will really help. Before starting the class, help students in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. In classes, give them frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. Frequent and prompt feedback will help your students assess themselves and reflect on what they have learned and what they still need to know.

Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task

"Academic learning time" (ALT) is the time engaged with materials or activities that results in high student success rates, as measured by instruments such as achievement tests. Students or classes that accrue large amounts of ALT achieve more than students or classes with lower amounts of ALT (Berliner, 1984). According to Sorcinelli (1991), a large-scale study of student evaluations of teaching showed consistently significant correlations between effective use of class time and overall ratings of course, instructor, and amount learned.

Assigning activities related to desired outcomes, seeing that enough time is allocated for students' mastery of a unit, and encouraging success through frequent testing and feedback are essential to emphasizing time on task. The more time students are engaged in learning, the greater the amount of their learning. Learning to spend class time effectively is very important to every instructor.

Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggest that the expectations and efforts of teachers and administrators can permeate an institution, creating an institutional climate that either challenges students or demands little of them. Generally speaking, if instructors set high but attainable goals for academic performance, students' academic achievement will increase (Berliner, 1984). Communication of low expectations by college teachers leads to minimal student growth, improvement, and satisfaction (Cross, 1987). The practice of setting high but attainable goals for learners has become a central theme of the reform movement in higher education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Some special programs help. For example, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside has communicated high expectations for underprepared high school students by bringing them to the University for workshops in academic subjects, study skills, test taking, and time management. The University of California-Berkeley introduced an honors program in the sciences for underprepared minority students.

Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

People come to college with different talents and learning styles. This final principle emphasizes the need to respect students' unique interests and talents to facilitate student growth and development academically, personally, and socially. People learn in different ways. A match between instructional methods and students' learning styles can lead to improved learning.

This principle can be approached in many ways. For example, at the University of California-Irvine, introductory physics students may choose among a lecture and textbook course, a computer-based version of the lecture and textbook course, or a computer-based course accompanied by notes developed by the faculty that allow students to program the computer. In both computer-based courses, students work on their own and must pass mastery exams. Some other ways include individualized degree programs, personalized systems of instruction, and mastery learning.

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Try It...You'll Like It!

Implementation of the principles requires some interaction among faculty in discussion of curriculum and programs. AAHE supported the development of planning and development aides formatted as a survey questionnaire to allow individuals and groups the opportunity to assess the extent to which aspects of the principles are present on their campus. Several departments and colleges on campus have already used the forms with varying degrees of satisfaction.

The "survey" was developed in two substantially different forms. One form investigates the extent to which elements of the principles are present on campus. Users of the survey estimate the presence or absence of key policies and practices. The form is organized around institutional elements: Climate, Academic Practices, Curriculum, Faculty, Academic and Student Support Services, and Facilities. Each section lists eleven different policies or practices. The form is designed to draw action statements from the user.

The second form was developed for use by faculty. It asks ten explicit behavioral questions about each of the seven principles. A faculty member or a group of faculty can judge the extent to which the principles are used. Chickering, Gamson, and Barsi (1989) suggest that the surveys help to diagnose next steps for an institution or a departmental unit. The process is not recommended for evaluation of programs or for justification. It gets people thinking about what to do next.

We have sent 5 forms of each type to each departmental unit and college with this issue. We have an additional 300 copies in University Assessment. Departments that would like to use the survey forms as discussion documents may request copies.

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Instructional Exchange

Volume 4 Number 6 March 1993

Office of University Assessment
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5124

Who Needs Feedback About Classroom Learning?

One of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education is to give prompt feedback to students regarding how well they are learning. This principle is based on the presumption that feedback will help the student direct his/her study activities and will allow him/her to set priorities on future study by knowing what the instructor thinks is important. Knowing the instructor's priorities is important because he or she is knowledgeable about the discipline as a whole. Without guidance from a faculty member, the structure of the discipline may not be clear.

The same need for information might be said of the instructor. Knowing what the students understand, or perhaps, misunderstand, allows the instructor to direct his/her teaching activities and allows him/her to set priorities by knowing what students think. Knowing what the students believe to be important aspects of the discipline is useful because it will help the instructor guide the development of students in understanding of the discipline as a whole.

Partnership in the classroom is enhanced by feedback to and from each of the parties. As Cross (1988, p. 2) has pointed out, "teachers need to receive continuous and accurate feedback on the impact of their teaching on students in their classrooms so that they may improve their teaching."

Just as our understanding of the disciplines is enhanced by scholarly research, Cross has suggested that faculty conduct classroom research to improve practice. One of the major innovations in her discussion of classroom research has been the use of classroom assessment activities. Faculty familiar with the literature on the improvement of writing in the classroom will find most of the suggestions for classroom assessment standard practice rather than innovative.

Unlike tests and quizzes which have been used traditionally to evaluate student learning, Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are ungraded and usually anonymous. The purpose of the classroom assessment is to evaluate the whole class's learning in order to adjust instruction, not to evaluate the achievement of an individual student in order to assign a grade. It offers faculty the opportunity to discover not just whether students are learning, or what they are learning, but how they learn and how well they learn in response to how we teach (Kort, 1991).

While an instructor might simply use informal questioning of students during class to assess student understanding, Cross and Angelo (1988) have documented a number of different techniques used in college classrooms. The examples provided in this issue are presented as cases within the context of a specific discipline, although they might be used in a number of different disciplines. The use of any technique will, of course, be tempered by the discipline, the goals of instruction, the size of the class, and the instructor's preference.

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Classroom Assessment Tchniques (CATS)

A case format for each of the assessment techniques is presented below. The primary source for the material was a monograph by Angelo (1991) which we recommend for its presentation of real faculty confronting real problems. However, we recognize that some may want a more straightforward discussion of each of the techniques. For that reason, we provided the page references for the description outside of a specific classroom from Cross and Angelo. We are not suggesting that any faculty member would use all of these techniques. As Cross and Angelo (1988) have suggested, assessment should not become a chore. Decide on something that fits into your teaching style and discipline.

The "One-Minute Paper"

(Cross and Angelo, 1988, pp. 148-150)

The "One-Minute Paper" was developed by a physics professor at UC Berkeley. It asks students to respond anonymously to two questions at the end of the class period: (1) What is the most important thing you learned in class today? and (2) What question remains uppermost in your mind? The students' responses make it possible for the teacher to make adjustments in the following class based on what students have already learned well and what confusions need to be cleared up (Angelo, 1991, p. 22). Frederick Mosteller, professor of statistics at Harvard, adapted and further streamlined the technique. He reported getting very useful feedback simply by asking students to answer one question: "What was the 'muddiest point' in my lecture today?". Faculty can get "Muddiest Point" feedback by simply distributing index cards to the class (Angelo, 1991, p. 10).

The 15 Minute Re-cap

The 15 minute re-cap was initially presented at a Lilly Foundation Seminar on Teaching that Dona Icabone of our Special Education Department attended. They suggested that after every major concept about 15 minutes of class time be devoted to a quick review by placing an objective question on an overhead projector. The class can read the stem of the question and as a group select one option or another. The reasons for the selection provide the instructor with a good sense of misunderstandings in the classroom.

Professor Icabone has adapted the technique so that the review of previous material is conducted at the beginning of class. The review provides the students with an opportunity to reflect on the material and to read the textbook. The discussion of questions, then, serves to integrate the material from the lecture and the textbook and to provide an effective bridge to new material.

The Background Knowledge Probe

(Cross and Angelo, 1988, pp. 30-32)

Before the first meeting of the survey course, a political science instructor decided to assess what his students already knew. It helped him apportion his instructional time more effectively to areas of low information. And this assessment helped him identify topics that students were already familiar with for later discussion in class.

The Probe was a two-page questionnaire that asked students to rate their level of knowledge on 15 important concepts, documents, and individuals. He explained the purpose of the survey and asked students not to put their names on the questionnaire. The results of the survey allowed the instructor to use the more familiar items to introduce and explain the less familiar ones. The questionnaire served as a quick overview of the important concepts for the students (Angelo, 1991, p. 20).

The Documented Problem-Set Solution

(Cross and Angelo, 1988, pp. 38-40)

A math teacher used an adaptation of the Documented Problem-Set Solution technique to assess how well his students' problem-solving skills were developing. He substituted the assessment technique for part of an existing homework assignment which consisted of five problems daily. In place of the fifth problem, he gave students the following

About Instructional Exchange

Instructional Exchange (I/X) is published six times per year during the fall and winter semesters. The purpose of I/X is to provide a forum for the exchange of information about instruction at Western Michigan University.

The newsletter is published by the Office of University Assessment. Comments and exchanges can be directed to the I/X staff at University Assessment (Room 2010 Administration Building, ph: 7-3031) or through the VAX system addressed to BUNDA.
Editor: Mary Anne Bunda
Managing Editor: Marcia Mascolini
Production Editor: Jie Gao

exercise directions: "Choose any one of the four problems in this set that you have already solved. Explain and document, step by step, in complete and grammatical sentences, exactly how you solved that problem. Be prepared to lead the class through your documented problem solution next session." (Angelo, 1991, p. 24) He offered students credit for doing the exercise, but he refrained from grading it. He limited himself to writing a comment, suggestion, or question in the margin. He was more interested in getting insight into how and where his students got stuck or took wrong turns. In class, when students were called on to demonstrate how they reached their solutions to specific homework problems, they were forced to become active participants.

This technique is used in some of the mathematics classes on our campus. Those particular classes are designated as writing intensive. Notice how the same technique can be used to strengthen students' writing ability, to strengthen problem-solving ability, and to give feedback to the instructor.

The Classroom Assessment Quality Circle

(Cross and Angelo, 1988, pp. 160-162)

Philip G. Cottell, Jr., an accounting instructor, used the Classroom Assessment Quality Circle (Cottell, 1991). This technique was originally adapted from industry where production-line employees work closely with managers to identify and solve production problems. Members of the circle were elected from a group of volunteers in a large class. Students were encouraged to express any course-related suggestions to the representatives. To make the assessment as frank as possible, Cottell assured the students that he would not request, and that Quality Control Circle representatives would not reveal, any names of those who commented to the Circle. Cottell met frequently with the Quality Control Circle throughout the semester. The information he got enabled him to make rapid adjustments in his teaching. In addition to providing Professor Cottell with information on his teaching, the Quality Circle serves as a opportunity to practice a business application.

The Student Goals Technique

(Cross and Angelo, 1988, pp. 90-93)

An instructor who teaches a large elective aerobics class was concerned about the high dropout rate and absenteeism in her class. She had tried to change the class in various ways over the years hoping to find a solution to the problem. Nothing worked out until she had the insight that the students' goals and expectations might be the key to the issue. Therefore, she decided to use an adaptation of the Student Goals Ranking technique to assess the students' goals for the course (Angelo, 1991, p. 28).

Before the semester began, she wrote down what she thought the students' most important goals were in taking the course. She took a few minutes out of the first class period, handed out blank index cards and asked the students to write down their most important goals for aerobics. After class, she read through the responses and compared them to what she expected the students' goals to be. She found a discrepancy in these two sets of goals. She realized that her attempts to change the class were in conflict with students' goals of improving self-confidence and reducing stress. She reported the results of the assessment to the group during the next class and invited suggestions from the students. The solution to close the discrepency was that she tried to incorporate the students' goals and suggestions into the course in several ways. The atmosphere in the classroom changed after she and the students knew they were working toward the same goals.

The One-Word Journals

An English instructor who taught a literature course for majors was dissatisfied with her students' superficial reading of assigned texts. In order to assess the students' skill at reading for meaning, she modified a technique called the One-Word Journal (Angelo, 1991, p. 22).

When she assigned short readings such as poems or short stories, she asked her students to come up with a single word they felt would best summarize the assigned reading. The students were also expected to write one page or less explaining why the individual words were appropriate for summarizing the reading. Credit was assigned for the summaries depending on the completeness and quality of the responses. The one word and the accompanying summary helped the instructor get a sense of the students' depth of reading and the quality of explanation. She discussed the journal entries in class to let students exchange opinions on the words chosen and convince one another of the justification of choosing the words. This technique not only provided the instructor with information on how well students were reading, but also made it possible for the instructor to teach students about the development of criteria for quality in literary criticism.

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Classroom Assessment Guidelines

Although CATs have been described at a number of different levels of formality and are very flexible, faculty should be careful as they decide to change their teaching style. Cottell (1991) has suggested a few guidelines for professors who are considering a change.

1. **Be careful** about data collection. You may ask students for evidence of what, how, and how well they are learning. But surely, you wouldn't ask all of the questions. Adapt appropriate CATs to help you collect your assessment data. Be careful not to collect so much data that it is useless. You don't want to increase your workload too much. Use index cards to keep students' responses short and concise after a single class period. However, questionnaires and longer responses may also be appropriate if you are gathering data for semester planning.

2. **Anonymity** is a typical feature of Classroom Assessment. Students can write more honest responses if the assessment exercise is ungraded and anonymous. However, some faculty do give credit to students who complete the exercises as an encouragement. Consider how much student credit will be required for adequate participation in your class.

3. **Always report** back to students the class's response. Students need to know that their responses count. Sharing the feedback makes the students aware that instructors are interested in changing their teaching. Reporting back the responses may be the opening of clarification.

4. **Assess the adjustments**. Continue a cycle of data collection until you are satisfied with the level of understanding in the class. Don't assume that learning will take place the second time, especially if it didn't happen the first time.

Help in Writing

The Academic Skills Center offers tutoring in writing for undergraduate students only. The Writing Lab is located in 1039 Moore Hall. Students may be referred for writing help in two different ways: a professor referral or self referral. The referral may result in a regular one- to two-hour-a-week tutoring session or a drop-in session. However, students should be aware that appointments must be made a week in advance for drop-in sessions. Tutoring is available from January 16 to April 6 for Winter semester, and May 8 to June 21 for Spring session. Tutors can work with students on redrafting papers for any class.

The lab hours are 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Friday. For more information, please call 387-4442.

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